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Sara Jones

COMPLICITY, CENSORSHIP AND CRITICISM

NEGOTIATING SPACE
IN THE GDR LITERARY SPHERE



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Sara Jones

Complicity, Censorship and Criticism

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Foreword

This study has its origins in doctoral research completed at the University of Nottingham from 2005 to 2008. I would like to thank the Arts and Humanities Research Council for providing funding for this project. I also wish to thank my doctoral supervisor, Professor Roger Woods, for his invaluable advice and expertise throughout the process of researching and writing this study. Thanks go to Professor Matthias Uecker for offering his inexhaustible knowledge as second supervisor and Dr Franziska Meyer, not only for her continuing support and motivation, but also for pointing me towards the Elfriede Brüning collection at the Fritz-Hüser-Institut and for her assistance in preparing and publishing the interview with Brüning. The comments and advice of Dr Meyer and Professor Stephen Parker as examiners of the thesis from which this study has been developed have been invaluable. Alison Lewis's help and advice, particularly her expertise in the area of memories of the Stasi, have been particularly important and I wish to thank her and the other members of the Department of German at the University of Melbourne for welcoming me as a visitor in September 2007. I am also grateful to Birgit Dahlke for her advice and direction at the start of my project. Thanks go to Herr Wagner of the BStU, Frau Palm of the Fritz-Hüser-Institut and the many archivists of the Bundesarchiv for their patience and practical support during my fieldwork in 2006. It has been a pleasure to work with the series editors at Walter de Gruyter and their comments and critiques have been immensely useful. I am also grateful to Elfriede Brüning for granting me permission to cite from her unpublished letters. Last, but certainly not least, thanks go to my parents and to my partner, Sean, for their unfailing patience and support.

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Introduction

Defining the GDR

Since the end of the GDR, access to the large volume of material in the archives of the SED and Stasi has resulted in an increasingly complex picture of East German society and SED rule and an increasingly diverse number of models and concepts that attempt to describe this complexity.¹ Writing in 1994, Michael Brie notes in reference to the competing models of GDR society that, “the dispute about the past is [also] a dispute about the social realities of the future” and “a political dispute, since the opposing political protagonists are using and abusing history as a means to power.”² Similarly, Corey Ross argues that “probably more than most areas of historical enquiry, interpretations of the GDR have always been particularly closely connected to the present.”³ If modelling the past means to model the future of East German identity in the united Germany then any conceptualisation of the GDR must seek to negotiate a path between memories of repression and nostalgic recollections of a sense of community and security, and to encompass the complexity of the varied experiences of the citizens of the GDR and their participation in a state that existed for forty years.

Brie notes that in the period immediately following the demise of the GDR the “terms ‘unjust state,’ ‘totalitarian society,’ or ‘SED dictatorship’ for the GDR [had] become firmly established, indeed dominant” and that “this happened by a process of strict and very one-sided selection from the

1 See Konrad H. Jarausch, “Beyond Uniformity: The Challenge of Historicizing the GDR,” in *Dictatorship as Experience: Towards a Socio-Cultural History of the GDR*, ed. Konrad H. Jarausch, trans. Eve Duffy (New York: Berghahn, 1999), 3–14 (11). For a more detailed overview of the competing discourses in the immediate post-Wende period see Corey Ross, *The East German Dictatorship: Problems and Perspectives in the Interpretation of the GDR* (London: Arnold, 2002), 3–20.

2 Michael Brie, “The Difficulty of Discussing the GDR,” in *Understanding the Past, Managing the Future: Studies in GDR Culture and Society 13*, ed. Margy Gerber and Roger Woods (Lanham: University Press of America, 1994), 1–23 (1). Brie was professor of political science at the Humboldt University in Berlin, but was dismissed after admitting to having passed information on his students to the Stasi. He is currently the head of the Institute for Critical Social Analysis at the Rosa Luxemburg Foundation.

3 Ross, *The East German Dictatorship*, 6.

previous multiplicity of scholarly terms which attempted to capture the complex contradictions of East German society.”⁴ Two of the key theoretical texts cited by proponents of totalitarianism theories are Hannah Arendt’s *The Origins of Totalitarianism* (first published in 1951) and Carl Friedrich and Zbigniew Brzezinski’s *Totalitarian Dictatorship and Autocracy* (first published in 1956). Principally referring to Nazi Germany and Stalinist Russia, Arendt describes totalitarian movements as a “perpetual-motion mania [...] which can remain in power only so long as they keep moving and set everything around them in motion” and which seek the “permanent domination of each single individual in each and every sphere of life.”⁵ She considers one of the key features to be the “demand for total, unrestricted, unconditional, and unalterable loyalty of the individual member” (323). Arendt states that the superiority of totalitarian propaganda lies in its “organization of the entire texture of life according to an ideology,” which results in the content of propaganda becoming “as real and untouchable an element in [the citizens’] lives as the rules of arithmetic” (363). She also places emphasis on the importance of the Leader, “not as a person, but as a function,” (374) a dichotomous view of the world and the concept of “objective enemies,” who are defined not by their actions, but by ideology and the “will of the Leader” (422). For Arendt, “terror is the essence of totalitarian domination,” (464) which destroys not only the “public realm of life,” but also “private life” (475).

Friedrich and Brzezinski’s account of totalitarianism is based on comparisons with past and contemporary tyrannies. They consider that totalitarianism is a particular form of autocracy, adapted to twentieth-century industrial society and that “fascist and communist totalitarian dictatorships are basically alike, or at any rate more nearly like each other than like any other system of government.”⁶ Friedrich and Brzezinski identify six basic features or traits that are common to totalitarian dictatorship: “ideology, a single party typically led by one man, a terroristic police, a communications monopoly, a weapons monopoly, and a centrally directed economy” (21). They state that although totalitarians may seek to achieve total control, “no such control is actually achieved, even within the ranks of their party membership or cadres, let alone over the population at large” (16). What is new, according to the authors, is the “effort to resuscitate such total control in the service of an ideologically motivated movement,

4 Brie, “The Difficulty of Discussing the GDR,” 7.

5 Hannah Arendt, *The Origins of Totalitarianism*, 2nd enl. edn (Cleveland: World Publishing, 1958), 306 and 326.

6 Carl J. Friedrich and Zbigniew K. Brzezinski, *Totalitarian Dictatorship and Autocracy*, 2nd edn rev. by Carl J. Friedrich (New York: Praeger, 1966), 15.

dedicated to the total destruction and reconstruction of a mass society” (17). The broadening of the base of legitimacy in the Soviet Union under Khrushchev is seen by the authors as “a new phase in the evolution of totalitarian leadership proper, which might be called popular totalitarianism,” which, following Barrington Moore, they describe as “a diffuse system of repression more or less willingly accepted by the mass of the population” (43).

The appropriateness of these models of total control in analysis of the GDR has been fiercely debated since their revival after 1989. In an essay in 2006, Lothar Fritze argues that the renaissance of the term “totalitarian,” particularly in West Germany, has been the result of the desire to delegitimise the subject of study rather than of a true assessment of the characteristics of the East German state with reference to the appropriate models:

In the last fifteen years, historical research has indeed uncovered a vast amount of detailed empirical knowledge about the GDR; however, this has not included anything that would be essential for the characterisation of the whole system as ‘totalitarian’ and which was not known before 1989.⁷

Fritze considers that the attempt at delegitimation and the reduction of a complex and multi-faceted reality to a single concept leads to unequivocal positions that lack differentiation.⁸ He calls upon social scientists to avoid such one-sided characterisations and to portray the subject of their research in all its complexity, ambivalence and contradictions.⁹ Similarly, Corey Ross tracks the development of the term totalitarianism from its use in the 1950s, to its rejection by many Western scholars in the 1970s and 1980s and its revival after the collapse of the GDR. He argues that Arendt’s model “bears little resemblance to the increasingly conservative and sclerotic communist systems after Stalin’s death” and that, “although more appropriate for the GDR than Arendt’s model,” Friedrich and Brzezinski’s concept of totalitarianism “does not account for internal changes within the governing system” and “paints an unconvincingly monolithic picture of ‘totalitarian regimes’ which generally does not stand up to close

7 Lothar Fritze, “Delegitimierung und Totalkritik: Kritische Anmerkungen nach fünfzehn Jahren Aufarbeitung der DDR-Vergangenheit,” *Sinn und Form*, 58.5 (2006): 645–46. Cf. Angela Borgwardt, *Im Umgang mit der Macht: Herrschaft und Selbstbehauptung in einem autoritären politischen System* (Wiesbaden: Westdeutscher Verlag, 2002), 65. Borgwardt argues that the term “totalitarian state” is still frequently used “as a war-cry against political repression on the basis of an emotionally-charged anti-Communism [...] and proves itself to be of little use as an instrument of subtle analysis.” Unless otherwise stated, all translations from German are my own.

8 Fritze, “Delegitimierung und Totalkritik,” 646.

9 Ibid., 658.

scrutiny.”¹⁰ Ross considers that in such models “the would-be ‘totalitarian’ party’s ideological claims, rather than the actual social conditions and mechanisms of rule, serve as the primary measure of reality. As a result, the concept, however defined, cannot adequately grasp the peculiarities of the systems it proposes to classify.”¹¹ Moreover, Ross argues that “totalitarian concepts are clearly inadequate when analysing developments outside of this realm [the apparatus of power] such as the social and cultural developments which help to shape and sustain dictatorial rule.”¹²

Konrad H. Jarausch similarly criticises interpretations which focus on the repressive nature of GDR politics and society, as being motivated by anticommunism and which take “communist propaganda claims largely at face value, and consider(s) East German society [to be] thoroughly politicized, organized by subsidiaries of the ruling party so as to leave no space for a normal private life.”¹³ Jarausch argues that the task of the GDR historian “consists of coming to terms with the contradictions of the GDR experience so as to recover the various shades of grey, characteristic even

10 Ross, *The East German Dictatorship*, 22.

11 Ibid., 34. Cf. Mary Fulbrook, “Methodologische Überlegungen zu einer Gesellschaftsgeschichte der DDR, in *Die Grenzen der Diktatur: Staat und Gesellschaft in der DDR*, ed. Richard Bessel and Ralph Jessen (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck and Ruprecht, 1996), 274–97 (283). Fulbrook argues that simplifying concepts, whether underscored with the word totalitarianism or not, tend to overlook the complexity and “reciprocal interconnections” [wechselseitige Verschränkungen] without which stability and change in the forty-year history of the GDR cannot be explained.

12 Ross, *The East German Dictatorship*, 34.

13 Jarausch, “Beyond Uniformity,” 3–4. Mario Keßler and Thomas Klein criticise totalitarianism theory along the same lines. See Mario Keßler and Thomas Klein, “Repression and Tolerance as Methods of Rule in Communist Societies,” in Jarausch, *Dictatorship as Experience*, 109–21 (111). Martin Sabrow states that viewing the regime “from above” “concentrates on static and unchanging intentions or goals, rather than focusing on the actual practice of rule” and argues for a cultural-historical approach examining “the non-material structures of East German realities which shaped patterns of action and thought over a period of forty years.” Sabrow does, however, endorse many of Arendt’s thoughts on totalitarianism, notably the “‘transformation of fact into fiction,’” “the absolute control of human life” and the erasure of “the boundaries between individuals and society as a whole, rulers and the ruled, fact and fiction, truth and falsehood,” but Sabrow states that this theory is “limited by the fact that it declares its own reality to be the only existing one.” Martin Sabrow, “Dictatorship as Discourse: Cultural Perspectives on SED Legitimacy,” in Jarausch, *Dictatorship as Experience*, 195–211 (197 and 207). Cf. Mary Fulbrook, “Ein ‘ganz normales Leben’? Neue Forschungen zur Sozialgeschichte der DDR,” in *Das war die DDR: DDR-Forschung im Fadenkreuz von Herrschaft, Außenbeziehungen, Kultur und Souveränität*, ed. Heiner Timmermann (Münster: Lit Verlag, 2004), 115–34 (117–19). Fulbrook argues for the concept of “normalisation,” the possibility that certain social groups at certain times might live “a completely normal life.” See also Mary Fulbrook, “Historiografische Kontroversen seit 1990,” in *Views from Abroad: Die DDR aus britischer Perspektive*, ed. Peter Barker, Marc-Dietrich Ohse and Dennis Tate (Bielefeld: W. Bertelsmann, 2007), 41–51.

of life under a dictatorship.”¹⁴ He describes the GDR under Honecker as “post-totalitarian, since it largely replaced brute force with indirect incentives” and coins the terms “welfare dictatorship” [Fürsorgediktatur] in an attempt “to capture both the egalitarian aspirations of socialism and its dictatorial practice.”¹⁵ In the same volume, Jürgen Kocka also questions the use of the term “totalitarian” to describe the GDR. Noting that, although the GDR may have shown many of the characteristics outlined by Friedrich and Brzezinski, “this definition applied more fully to the early years of the GDR than to the development of its latter years” and that its association with the more violent and extreme regimes of Nazi Germany and Stalinist Russia makes its use in reference to the post-Stalinist “People’s Democracies” problematic.¹⁶ Kocka also considers that the term “post-totalitarian” would seem more appropriate, indicating the “decline in violence and diminishing mobility as well as the lack of total control, characteristic of post-Stalinist systems,” which, according to Kocka, was expressed as “increasing inflexibility and stagnation” in the GDR (24). Kocka calls for historians to approach the GDR from a multiplicity of perspectives, not solely from those that focus on the state “‘from above,’” and “to open up the study of social structures and processes, perceptions, actions, and encounters which – although seldom entirely untouched by the dictatorship – nevertheless possessed their own inner logic, and often their own intrinsic value” (24).

Addressing the issue of exclusively top-down conceptualisation of the GDR, Mary Fulbrook has developed the term “participatory dictatorship.” With this model, Fulbrook seeks to “underline the ways in which the people themselves were at one and the same time both constrained and affected by, and yet also actively and often voluntarily carried, the ever changing social and political system of the GDR.”¹⁷ Fulbrook notes that analyses of individual areas of GDR society “reveals a world that is not often represented in traditional political histories of the GDR” and “in which there was far more openness and genuine debate about how to improve the basic conditions of everyday life than might be thought” (9). She argues that “people living in the GDR were active participants in a more complex maze of practices, and inhabited a more complex moral and political universe, than has frequently been posited” (13). According to Fulbrook, this means

14 Jarausch, “Beyond Uniformity,” 5.

15 Ibid., 6.

16 Jürgen Kocka, “The GDR: A Special Kind of Modern Dictatorship,” in Jarausch, *Dictatorship as Experience*, 17–26 (23–24).

17 Mary Fulbrook, *The People’s State: East German Society from Hitler to Honecker* (London: Yale University Press, 2005), 12.

that models “emphasising power, repression and fear [do] not do justice to the very different memories of many of those who lived and worked under this regime” (10). Jarausch also notes that the “public struggle between the hard and soft views of the GDR [...] revolves around a clash of different memories, depending upon whether one was a protagonist, a victim or merely a bystander of the SED regime.”¹⁸ Jarausch states that detailed analysis “suggests a considerable variety in actual lives beneath the normalizing uniformity of dictatorship” and calls for historians, through a focus on actual East German people, to consider the “interrelationship [...] shifting patterns and [...] precise implications” of the varied facets of GDR society.¹⁹

Analysts who question the usefulness of totalitarian theories for any study of the GDR thus emphasise the complexity, differentiation, ambiguity and ambivalence of GDR society and call for researchers to investigate the everyday experiences of those living in the GDR rather than focusing solely on the ideological claims of the Party and the overarching structures of rule. What new insights can be achieved, if, following this impulse, one segment of GDR society is analysed in detail and in all its complexity and contradictions? What, in turn, can detailed examination of one sector of society feed back into a broad conceptualisation of the GDR? What are the limits of dictatorship when viewed through the lens of the network of personal links and interactions between rulers and ruled in a specific social structure?²⁰ This study addresses these questions through a focus on the processes of one particularly complex arena of interaction between Party functionaries and individuals of varying political outlooks and stances: the arena of literary production. I examine the relationship between writers and representatives of the cultural apparatus, power equations within the processes of literary production, strategies of communication between the different actors in these processes, repression and the implementation of the Party line and shifts and changes within cultural directives. Through an examination of concrete processes, negotiations and interactions within the context of institutional structures, combining the “triad of structure, mechanisms and agency,”²¹ I aim to look at GDR cultural history and

18 Jarausch, “Beyond Uniformity,” 5.

19 Ibid., 8.

20 Richard Bessel and Ralph Jessen identify the network of personal relationships that ran through official structures of power as a new “limit of the dictatorship” caused by the removal of the line drawn between representatives of power and society. See Richard Bessel and Ralph Jessen, “Einleitung: Die Grenzen der Diktatur,” in Bessel and Jessen, *Die Grenzen der Diktatur*, 7–23 (16).

21 This approach is suggested by Simone Barck, Christoph Classen and Thomas Heimann as being particularly productive in the analysis of the nature of communication in the

probe the concept of the ambiguity and ambivalence of individual experience, while also drawing broader conclusions from commonalities and patterns that emerge from these individual accounts.

What particular contribution can an analysis of culture make towards our understanding of the GDR? In their analysis of totalitarianism Friedrich and Brzezinski group literature and the arts among the “islands of separateness [...] in the totalitarian sea.”²² In the same volume, Gail Lapidus argues that the struggles between writers and regime over questions of cultural policy, particularly in the Soviet Union, “reveal the extent to which the writers and artists constitute an island of separateness, resisting total assimilation to the totalitarian system.”²³ However, this view of cultural production focuses solely on the element of repression of artistic freedom and insists on a dichotomous view of *Geist* (intellect) versus *Macht* (power), with the former defending its integrity against the totalitarian demands of the latter. As Stuart Parkes argues, this opposition of the two, “the assumption that the worlds of literature and politics are entirely distinct” has a long tradition in Germany. Parkes notes that the work of Heinrich Mann, in particular, “is suffused with statements that contrast the two realms, with ‘Geist’ invariably seen in a most positive light and ‘Macht’ viewed with deep distrust.”²⁴ However, this dichotomous approach does not contribute a great deal to an examination of the interactions between these groups and the negotiation and compromise between the various actors in the processes of cultural production.²⁵ The potential objections to this analysis of culture thus mirror many of the objections to the use of totalitarian models for the analysis of GDR society in general.

Lapidus’s placing of cultural production in a position of distinction from the rest of society would suggest that its usefulness for analysis of GDR society in general is limited. By describing the failure to completely

GDR and gaining an understanding of the “specific institutional and individual spheres of media.” See Simone Barck, Christoph Classen and Thomas Heimann, “The Fettered Media,” in Jarausch, *Dictatorship as Experience*, 213–39 (234).

22 Friedrich and Brzezinski identify three other such areas outside of totalitarian control: the family, the churches and the universities and technicians (*Totalitarian Dictatorship and Autocracy*, 279).

23 Gail W. Lapidus, “Literature and the Arts,” in Friedrich and Brzezinski, *Totalitarian Dictatorship and Autocracy*, 329–39 (339).

24 Stuart Parkes, “The German ‘Geist und Macht’ Dichotomy: Just a Game of Red Indians?,” in *Politics and Culture in Twentieth-Century Germany*, ed. William Niven and James Jordan (New York: Camden House, 2003), 43–62 (43–44).

25 Indeed, in his analysis of the interaction between intellect and power in Germany in the modern period, Parkes notes: “Within all the periods under discussion, it would be possible to cite instances where particular writers, artists, and other intellectuals lived in harmony with the political authorities.” “The German ‘Geist und Macht’ Dichotomy,” 46.

assimilate cultural production into the totalitarian regime as indicating that this area is somehow different or “separate” from the rest of society, such approaches tend to rule out the possibility that the underlying tensions in the sphere of cultural production might be replicated in other spheres of activity. However, this study takes the view that cultural production and the experiences of those involved in its processes cannot be seen in such isolation from the society of which they are a product. I will present case studies from the area of cultural production and will also consider the extent to which the structures of power, the strategies of communication and the tactics of negotiation seen here are reflected in other areas of GDR life.

The Intellectuals

The intellectuals of the GDR have been the subjects of much media and academic interest both before and after unification. The “Literature Debate” [Literaturstreit] following the publication of Christa Wolf’s *Was bleibt* (1990) (*What remains*, 1993) saw bitter attacks on GDR writers for their apparent lack of resistance to the SED and what was viewed as their legitimisation of the regime through their decision to remain, and in many cases publish, in the country. As Thomas Anz notes, the debate led to the question of how the moral integrity of GDR intellectuals should be judged and, furthermore, if their continued commitment to the ideals of socialism, despite the failure of “really existing socialism,” can be justified.²⁶ The opening of the Stasi files and the revelations that many prominent intellectuals had worked with the State Security Service sparked further criticism of GDR authors and led Manfred Jäger, among others, to consider exactly what the relationship had been between GDR intellectuals and the SED regime.²⁷ Since 1989, a number of commentators have sought to answer these questions through developing theoretical models of the GDR intellectual. I have identified three core areas in these accounts of intellectual involvement in the GDR: antifascism, socialism and closeness to the ruling elite; censorship and repression; the critical voice of literature and the role of intellectuals in the end of the GDR. It is beyond the scope of this study

26 See Thomas Anz, ed., *Es geht nicht um Christa Wolf: Der Literaturstreit im vereinten Deutschland* (Frankfurt am Main: Fischer, 1995), 46. The term “really existing socialism” [real existierender Sozialismus] was the official self-definition of the state from the 1970s and was intended to differentiate socialism as practiced in the GDR from other strands of socialist thought, dismissed as utopian. It was also used by critics of the system to highlight the gap between the Marxist ideal and social reality.

27 See Manfred Jäger, “Auskünfte: Heiner Müller und Christa Wolf zu Stasi-Kontakten,” *Deutschland Archiv*, 2 (1993): 142–46.

to give a detailed account of the multiple positions taken in these debates; however, in the following, I will draw the broad contours of this discussion, identify key themes, and outline the position of this study in relation to the issues raised.

Antifascism, Socialism and Closeness to the Ruling Elite

Herfried Münkler describes antifascism as the political “founding myth” [Gründungsmythos] of the GDR. This founding myth was based not only on the resistance to fascism carried out by those who came to take power, but also on the communist interpretation of fascism as the work of the most aggressive forces of capitalism, which reorganisation of society into a socialist order would overcome.²⁸ This self-characterisation as the anti-fascist German state not only drew a line between the GDR and the past (Weimar Republic and Third Reich), but also separated East Germany from the West, which was accused of not having truly broken with its Nazi past. Münkler notes that for many who had been supporters of Nazism, but not directly involved with its crimes, this was a welcome interpretation of fascism, as it largely cleared them of any individual responsibility.²⁹ Jürgen Danyel also notes that the permanent recourse to the tradition of resistance to National Socialism bound citizens more strongly and durably to the state than any other element of SED ideology.³⁰

In a series of articles published since 1989, Wolfgang Emmerich outlines the effect of antifascism as a “loyalty trap” for GDR intellectuals, principally with respect to writers born in the mid- to late-1920s who had experienced and participated in Nazism as young adults.³¹ Emmerich

28 Herfried Münkler, “Antifaschismus und antifaschistischer Widerstand als politischer Gründungsmythos der DDR,” *Aus Politik und Zeitgeschichte*, 45 (1998): 16.

29 Ibid., 20.

30 Jürgen Danyel, “Die Opfer- und Verfolgtenperspektive als Gründungskonsens? Zum Umgang mit der Widerstandstradition und der Schuldfrage in der DDR,” in *Die geteilte Vergangenheit: Zum Umgang mit Nationalsozialismus und Widerstand in beiden deutschen Staaten*, ed. Jürgen Danyel (Berlin: Akademie Verlag, 1995), 31–46 (41). Cf. Jürgen Danyel, “Die geteilte Vergangenheit: Gesellschaftliche Ausgangslagen und politische Dispositionen für den Umgang mit Nationalsozialismus und Widerstand in beiden deutschen Staaten nach 1949,” in *Historische DDR-Forschung: Aufsätze und Studien*, ed. Jürgen Kocka (Berlin: Akademie Verlag, 1993), 129–47 (142). Here Danyel argues that the bad conscience of those who had played a role in the Nazi regime resulted in pressure to conform and stifled criticism vis-à-vis the new political elite – an effect that was strengthened, according to Danyel, by the position of moral superiority occupied by this elite as a result of their resistance to and persecution by the Nazis.

31 Wolfgang Emmerich, “Between Hypertrophy and Melancholy – The GDR Literary Intelligentsia in a Historical Context,” *Universitas*, 8 (1993): 273–85.

states that for these individuals, “*one* faith, a ‘total’ view of the world, was replaced by a *new* faith, a new totalitarian, closed world view: Marxism” (emphasis in original).³² These fellow-travellers of the Nazi regime, filled with shame, shock and guilt, were confronted with the Party, whose leadership was made up of antifascist resistance fighters and exiles, who offered the promise of redemption and absolution and who declared those who joined the SED to be the victors of history. The result was, in Emmerich’s view, the “voluntary-involuntary bond of the repenting sinner with antifascism, as the opposite of what he once belonged to: fascism.”³³ For Emmerich, the loyalty trap of antifascism became a straight-jacket for those intellectuals who fell into it, leaving them to soften their criticism of the SED regime for fear of being excluded from the antifascist consensus:

Whoever wanted to describe the GDR regime as it was [...] or even acted according to his own critical judgment, automatically lost the basic antifascist consensus, according to which being an antifascist was identical with being a good GDR citizen and vice-versa.³⁴

In Emmerich’s view, even those writers who later became openly critical of the reality of GDR socialism clung to the “double pattern of finding sense and meaning: to the (newly discovered or imagined) antifascism as well as to the socialist eschaton.”³⁵ The socialist ideal was conserved in the “shrine of utopia” (Ibid.).

Similarly, Joachim Lehmann argues that this loyalty trap, the fear that criticism would only serve the enemy in the West, led to the literary intelligence of the GDR standing almost without exception behind the SED in times of historical crisis: “the fear of giving munitions to the enemy camp and of being expelled from the community of antifascists as a parasite, was more powerful than the outrage caused by the terror and lies.”³⁶ Wolfgang Bialas argues that the bringing together of a “true antifascism” and “democratic new start” seemed to justify for many intellectuals unreserved

32 Ibid., 278–79.

33 Ibid.

34 Wolfgang Emmerich, “Deutsche Intellektuelle: was nun? Zum Funktionswandel der (ost-deutschen) literarischen Intelligenz zwischen 1945 und 1998,” in *After the GDR: New Perspectives on the Old GDR and the Young Länder*, ed. Laurence McFall and Lothar Probst (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2001), 3–27 (10).

35 Wolfgang Emmerich, “Deutsche Schriftsteller als Intellektuelle: Strategien und Aporien des Engagements in Ost und West von 1945 bis heute,” *Zeitschrift für Literaturwissenschaft und Linguistik*, 31 (2001): 41. See also Wolfgang Emmerich, “Heilsgeschehen und Geschichte – Nach Karl Löwith,” *Sinn und Form*, 46 (1994): 910.

36 Joachim Lehmann, “Die Rolle und Funktion der literarischen Intelligenz in der DDR: Fünf Anmerkungen,” *Der Deutschunterricht*, 5 (1996): 62.

commitment to the political system that represented this new start.³⁷ The East Germany literary critic, Werner Mittenzwei presents a more differentiated view of the individual responses of East German intellectuals to the narrative of antifascism. Nonetheless, in line with Emmerich, Lehmann and Bialas, he states that the second generation of East German writers whose “turning away from fascism [...] happened by way of Auschwitz” wanted to fight against barbarism side by side with those who had liberated Auschwitz and that their future political decisions were influenced by these past events.³⁸

Emmerich contends that the tradition of antifascism led to an “intimate, child-like, familial loyalty on the part of the fallen children, who had been brought back into grace by the socialist Überfathers.”³⁹ He argues that this symbiotic relationship was also a result of Marxist-Leninist interpretations of the role and potential of literature. Literature in the GDR was viewed from the outset as having a central function in the building and development of socialist society. This resulted, according to Emmerich, not only in art being instrumentalised for the purposes of propagating the socialist world view, but also in enormously increased status for the socialist writer.⁴⁰ It is the commitment to the antifascist tradition and the socialist cause which leads Bialas to describe the relationship between writers and representatives of power as symbiotic: “it is the historical-philosophical justification for their necessity in the name of a teleology of higher goals and values that allows intellectual aristocrats and power potentates to enter into a symbiotic union.”⁴¹

Similarly, Lehmann argues that the conflicts between writers and the state in the 1950s, ‘60s and ‘70s were based in this very real consensus: “the union of literary intelligence and Party, of ‘intellect and power,’ sealed with the founding of the GDR state, was felt to be a highly valuable achievement that could not be sacrificed due to a crisis in the relationship.”⁴² Gregor Ohlerich describes the “structural agreement” between the Party and socialist writers as a threefold consensus: “firstly, they understood

37 Wolfgang Bialas, *Vom unfreien Schweben zum freien Fall: Ostdeutsche Intellektuelle im gesellschaftlichen Umbruch* (Frankfurt am Main: Fischer, 1996), 166.

38 Werner Mittenzwei, *Die Intellektuellen: Literatur und Politik in Ostdeutschland 1945–2000* (Berlin: Aufbau Taschenbuch, 2003), 126. See also Irma Hanke, “Wendzeiten: Deutsche Schriftsteller in der Übergangsgesellschaft,” in *Deutschland: Eine Nation – doppelte Geschichte*, ed. Werner Weidenfeld (Cologne: Verlag Wissenschaft und Politik, 1993), 309–20 (311).

39 Emmerich, “Deutsche Schriftsteller als Intellektuelle,” 40.

40 Emmerich, “Between Hypertrophy and Melancholy,” 276.

41 Bialas, *Vom unfreien Schweben zum freien Fall*, 17.

42 Lehmann, “Die Rolle und Funktion der literarischen Intelligenz in der DDR,” 64.

themselves as socialists, secondly they accepted that literature had a moral and social function and thirdly they retained the concept of a social utopia as a central category.⁴³ Following Bourdieu, Ohlerich describes the relationship between the Party and intellectuals as a “structural complicity,” with each group needing the other for the realisation of a socialist society.⁴⁴ Building on the term “loyalty trap,” Ohlerich develops the concept of a “utopia trap,” in which, through a desire to build a better socialism, intellectuals in the GDR passed over fundamental problems, felt unable to voice substantial criticism and failed to recognise, “that this relationship was maintained at the cost of their credibility and cleared the way for political appropriation.”⁴⁵

Mittenzwei again approaches the issue of the relationship between writers and the state from a different perspective, and does not see GDR intellectuals as necessarily losing their role as critics of power through their close relationship with the ruling elite. However, in common with the commentators above, he does consider that East German writers in the early years had the role of educator and voice for the ideals of the Party. He states that the SED needed writers as “interpreters and representatives of their cause and their ideas” to help win over a population who still viewed the Russians with fear and who lived in a country whose industry had been destroyed by war.⁴⁶ Mittenzwei describes how SED functionaries in the 1940s and early 1950s had a naïve respect for art and valued it for its effect and influence on individuals, but this respect for the educational function of art also led them to mistrust those who produced it.⁴⁷ According to Mittenzwei, intellectuals returning from exile saw this close relationship with

43 Gregor Ohlerich, “Eine Typologie des sozialistischen Intellektuellen,” in Timmermann, *Das war die DDR*, 527–40 (534).

44 *Ibid.*, 534.

45 *Ibid.*, 536–38. Another, far harsher, assessment of this relationship is given by Paul Noack who states that through their engagement for an discredited political goal, GDR intellectuals had “defined themselves out of their own freedom,” that they became “instruments in the hands of the Party, that punished every deviation from their line as an attack on a secular faith.” Noack suggests that it was a fear of losing their prominent position that prevented GDR intellectuals from admitting their loss of belief in the system and a desire to belong and to have a purpose that made socialism attractive to so many. See Paul Noack, *Deutschland, deine Intellektuellen: Die Kunst sich in Abseits zu stellen* (Stuttgart: Bonn Aktuell, 1991), 54–58. Andreas Huyssen notes of this “double bind” of antifascism that, while it acted as both the “moral basis of a postfascist intellectual identity” and a “muzzle” for opponents of the regime, writers such as Christa Wolf also “criticized the antifascist liturgy in the GDR as an obstacle to a better coming-to-terms with the past, as an obstacle even to the construction of a socialist future.” Andreas Huyssen, “After the Wall: The Failure of German Intellectuals,” *New German Critique*, 52 (1991): 134–35.

46 Mittenzwei, *Die Intellektuellen*, 73.

47 *Ibid.*, 75–76.

those in power as the chance to realise the ideas they had developed in their literature: “they had, as Brecht put it, been invited into the kitchen, that is, the place where it was decided what people were going to eat.”⁴⁸

One of the most controversial aspects of the relationship between writers and representatives of power in the GDR was the willingness of a minority to inform on friends and colleagues for the Stasi. Hermann Vinke describes the hysterical atmosphere in this regard in the early 1990s and the competition between the major newspapers to exclusively cover the next revelation regarding the contact of prominent East Germans with the State Security Service.⁴⁹ Writers who admitted to meeting with the Stasi and to passing on information frequently gave as their motivation Party discipline, loyalty to the state and a willingness to serve the socialist cause.⁵⁰ In this context, in an article published in 2003, Emmerich links the willingness of many authors of the second generation to inform on colleagues and friends to the commitment to socialism and antifascism.⁵¹ The intense academic and media interest in writers who had worked as informants or “Inoffizielle Mitarbeiter” (IM) thus represents another strand in the discussion surrounding the relationship between “intellect” and “power” in the GDR.⁵² In this study, I will explore further the relationship between writers and the State Security Service, both from the perspective of those who informed for the Stasi and those who were the victims of Stasi observation, and consider

48 Ibid., 79.

49 Hermann Vinke, “Vorwort,” in *Akteneinsicht Christa Wolf: Zerrspiegel und Dialog*, ed. Hermann Vinke (Hamburg: Luchterhand Literaturverlag, 1993), 9–13.

50 For example, Frauke Meyer-Gosau cites Christa Wolf and Heiner Müller as individuals who stated that their willingness to work with the Stasi was based on a fundamental identification with the state. See Frauke Meyer-Gosau, “Hinhaltender Gehorsam: DDR-Schriftsteller über ihre Kooperation mit der Staatssicherheit,” in “Feinderklärung: Literatur und Staatssicherheit,” ed. Heinz Ludwig Arnold, special issue, *Text + Kritik*, 120 (1993): 107.

51 Wolfgang Emmerich, “Übergriff und Menschenwürde: Autoren der mittleren Generation zwischen Stasi-Kooperation und Verweigerung,” in *Die Stasi in der deutschen Literatur*, ed. Franz Huberth (Tübingen: Attempto, 2003), 87–110.

52 Examples of academic works with this focus include Peter Böthig and Klaus Michael, eds, *MachtSpiele: Literatur und Staatssicherheit* (Leipzig: Reclam, 1993); Karl Corino, *Die Akte Kant: IM ‘Martin,’ die Stasi und die Literatur in Ost und West* (Reinbek bei Hamburg: Rowohlt, 1995); Karl Deiritz, “Zur Klärung eines Sachverhalts – Literatur und Staatssicherheit,” in *Verrat an der Kunst? Rückblicke auf die DDR-Literatur*, ed. Karl Deiritz and Hannes Krauss (Berlin: Aufbau Taschenbuch, 1993), 11–17; Jäger, “Auskünfte: Heiner Müller und Christa Wolf zu Stasi-Kontakten”; Alison Lewis, *Die Kunst des Verrats: Der Prenzlauber Berg und die Staatssicherheit* (Würzburg: Königshausen & Neumann, 2003); Meyer-Gosau, “Hinhaltender Gehorsam”; Vinke, *Akteneinsicht Christa Wolf*; Ian Wallace, “Writers and the Stasi,” in *Re-assessing the GDR: Papers from a Nottingham Conference*, ed. J. H. Reid (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 1994), 115–28; the section on IM in Joachim Walther, *Sicherungsbereich Literatur: Schriftsteller und Staatssicherheit in der Deutschen Demokratischen Republik* (Berlin: Christoph Links, 1996).